**Eqbal with an E**

[**Usama Asghar**](https://www.nation.com.pk/columnist/usama-asghar)

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In my early days in university, I endeavoured to participate in the class discussion about the US incursion in various countries and the ugly battles of the United States in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. I touched upon Eqbal by saying that;

“Mam, Eqbal also jotted down much about the United States’ war policies. He was a prominent intellectual figure at that time, and his famous incident of kidnapping Henry Kissinger, who was the then security advisor to President Nixon.”

My teacher wasn’t aware of Eqbal Ahmad, to which she replied,

“Which Eqbal are you talking about?”

“I replied. Mam, it’s Eqbal with an E. Not Iqbal, the poet.”

I am not questioning the credibility of my teacher here; not everyone knows everything. Our soil has elicited many intellectuals. The world recognised and acknowledged them, and their works are still being taught and discussed in other countries but unfortunately, we went awry even to remember him. Eqbal is considered one of the pioneer thinkers of South Asia, and if he were walking today on the road, no one would recognise him.

[Foreign Secretary, ED UNEP discuss ways to promote cooperation](https://www.nation.com.pk/31-Jan-2023/foreign-secretary-ed-unep-discuss-ways-to-promote-cooperation)

Pakistan’s education system is flawed, and this is not a new debate. We have been talking about this significant issue for years or probably decades. Unfortunately, neither we evolve nor our education system. Our educational institutions aren’t producing critical minds; if we find some critical minds in our country and ask about their journeys of critical thinking, they always thank themselves for reading philosophy or being entangled in profound discussions.

Teachers are still teaching obsolete books in schools and colleges. Our educational department didn’t bother to disseminate revamped books with discoveries and inventions worldwide. Philosophy and humanities aren’t taught in schools and colleges, but one can opt for these subjects at the university. Philosophy plays a substantial role in the development of critical thinking. It doesn’t force humans on what to think but how to think. When an individual develops critical thinking, he becomes more analytical and reliable in the development of a community rather than a person who is an adherent of herd psychology. A person who is a disciple of herd psychology can be controlled easily.

[Security tightened in Islamabad after Peshawar mosque blast](https://www.nation.com.pk/31-Jan-2023/security-tightened-in-islamabad-after-peshawar-mosque-blast)

One major reason we aren’t eliciting brains like Eqbal Ahmed is the culture of our educational institutions. Students who are inquisitive, neither in science nor mathematics, are still being coerced to decide on one because no other major is being taught in schools and colleges at diverse levels like these subjects.

Pakistan studies are being taught in schools, and we all know how wrong it has been written. K. K Aziz debunked the credibility of Pakistan studies in his book “The Murder of History.” When we teach this inconsequential proportion of Pakistan studies in schools, and no philosophy and humanities, students will never take interest in such courses, and it will lead them to choose science or mathematics, which they loathe. Still, everyone prefers these courses for better career prospects. They become the followers of herd psychology, and with age passing, the beliefs that had been taught to them erroneously become vigorous. They don’t bother to read history and philosophy, making them irrational and unreasonable. Our educational institutions are the deathbed of critical thinking. We produce irrational and ludicrous minds in the millions every year, and few self-taught people prefer the other path. These millions of minds are one of many reasons for polarisation in the country because they are readily manipulated, and they are the first who become the prey of propaganda.

[Terrorist involved in intelligence officers' martyrdom killed during IBO](https://www.nation.com.pk/31-Jan-2023/terrorist-involved-in-intelligence-officers-martyrdom-killed-during-ibo)

The plenitude of irrationality in our country is making our society more radical, and extremism is being endorsed due to a lack of discussion and debating culture and derelict humanities courses in our educational institutions. It becomes arduous for university instructors to debunk their radical beliefs over distinguishing culture and religion for fear of being lynched over an insignificant rational discussion. They have never been taught at schools that you may contradict someone and still not despise them because it was never a chapter of science and mathematics but social sciences.

People want amusement in this country, but they need education and learning. Our celebrity classes have always flunked in intellectual discussions, and people follow them and make them their embodiments. Because it is easy to get entertainment and levity, but reading and learning are hard things to do, and it is indeed a painful process. That is why they don’t remember people like Eqbal Ahmed, and when they get to know someone, they disown them as we did to Abdus Salam over his religious beliefs.

[Pakistan reports eight coronavirus cases in 24 hours](https://www.nation.com.pk/31-Jan-2023/pakistan-reports-eight-coronavirus-cases-in-24-hours)

If we were taught that people exist in the world with distinct beliefs and cultures and if we have some issues with their beliefs, we can debate on them and agree on something or disagree and still not hate. If we had learned to think rationally, we could have embraced Abdus Salam.

Today our country is going through a lot of calamities. There is social injustice, the lynching of minorities, clamping down of women’s rights, inequality, environmental jeopardies, poverty, illiteracy, inflation, etc. We do not have the brains to think of and fight against this societal wickedness. The state has to revamp the structure and culture of our educational institutions. Education is a long-term project, and it requires more concentration, investment, and some intellectual brains to look over this department. Investment in education will not have its consequence in two or three years, but it will take many years and benefit the country.